



2020 Central Virginia Battlefields Trust – State of the Organization

President Tom Van Winkle

Normally, I would be delivering this address standing at the podium of our annual conference. We would all have enjoyed tours, a Friday evening reception, Saturday cocktails and dinner following with an interesting program. Unfortunately, we were unable to accomplish this in the face of the COVID-19 situation. The decision was again based on safety and wellbeing for all. Next year's annual conference will be celebrating CVBT's 25th anniversary and will be very special in many ways. Please set aside the dates of April 16, 17, 18, 2021.

I need to first commend our CVBT staff, Terry Rensel, Executive Director, and Sarah Kay Bierle, Assistant to the Executive Director. I have made the decision to close the CVBT office and follow Virginia guidelines. Terry and Sarah, like most of the rest of the country, are now working from their home offices. They have both been positive with these changes and continue to manage the CVBT and its mission. They have also become quite creative in this environment and have developed several communication tools for you, our Partners, to have some fun with while forced to stay home. I hope you are taking advantage of these.

The CVBT has not skipped a beat in continuing our mission to preserve endangered battlefields as several properties are still in the works. Having said that, we are working on creative avenues to procure these properties. As you might imagine, in the current economic—and I'll be polite and call it—downturn, donations and grant opportunities are scarce, understandably so. This requires some innovative thinking, and we're doing just that.

So, you may ask, Tom, why are you still so doggedly working on these battlefields in this current time of uncertainty? Simply put, 750,000 troops engaged and 100,000 casualties over four battles. The town of Fredericksburg bombarded, occupied by American soldiers, then ransacked. The war would change the way it would be fought going forward here, all in a short 18-month period in one relatively small geographic area!

These battlefields are outdoor classrooms as well as cemeteries in many cases. They hold the stories to one of our nation's harshest conflicts. What we, as a then-young country, experienced, as well as the blood of those who sacrificed their lives, are imbedded in the dirt and grass of these fields. We dare not allow their memories or this sacred ground to be lost to history, or their significance erased for all time. Therefore, we must strive to protect them and justly convey those accounts for future generations. The

alternative, our history will be lost forever, no longer considered important. We all see that current trend today.

Therefore, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust exists, and why for years we have toiled, and yes, at times struggled, as a small non-profit, to protect our American history. The CVBT's mission is to preserve land associated with these major campaigns: Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House.

The mission simply must continue.

We have no magic flowing stream of income. We rely on your support and grants obtained for properties that qualify. We have a two-person paid staff, a completely volunteer Board of directors and President. We strive each day to obtain enough funds to cover our expenses while perusing endangered Civil War battlefields. It is more challenging now than ever but we are up for that challenge.

CVBT is working on several properties, both in Fredericksburg and in Spotsylvania. One negotiation for a property in Chancellorsville has been put on hold due to a seller's request. We will hopefully pick that back up again when the family is ready. As I always say, these are never easy.

We continue working to pay off our mortgage on the 73.3 acres of Myers Hill in Spotsylvania. We are pleased to announce we have received a grant from the Virginia Battlefield Protection Fund, Commonwealth of Virginia, in the amount of \$163,114.00. We are also working on other grants as well. You have been very gracious in your donations towards this property. We still have more work to do to pay off this debt, we are looking towards completing this soon. There are some other announcements regarding Myer's Hill we hope to be able to make by this year's end as well.

We have retired our obligation on the Spotsylvania Court House battlefield 5th Corps Tract. With your help, and a grant, we have satisfied this debt and saved an important part of the battlefields story. We have also returned it to the view that would have been seen in 1864. Many thanks!

With the "stay at home" orders most of us face in the country due to the COVID-19 situation, CVBT has designed an interactive program entitled, "At Ease". This is essentially *Extra History in Your Inbox*. With the cancellation of almost, if not all, Civil War related activities this year we all need to feed our thirst for history. Visit the CVBT website and sign up, no cost and lots of fun!

Each year, the CVBT seeks out an individual, or group, that continually contributes to Civil War preservation and or education in Virginia. The recipient is conveyed the Dr. Michael P. Stevens award which was developed by the CVBT Board of Directors to recognize past president Dr. Mike Stevens years of service to the organization and preservation. The award, and the funds awarded with it, are out of the CVBT Board members pockets and not the CVBT's donated funds. A plaque is affixed to a trophy and that trophy remains on display at the CVBT office. For 2020, the CVBT is pleased to announce that we have selected Mr. Glenn Trimmer for his tremendous work in creating the Stafford County Civil War Park. This 41-acre park tells the story of the Army of the Potomac's Winter Encampment in 1863. More than 135,000 soldiers occupied Stafford County while their new commander, General Joseph Hooker rebuilt his army. This critical time has been referred to in soldier's letters as "The Union Army's Valley Forge." Please look for a separate and more detailed announcement to come. We congratulate Glenn and thank him for all his hard work.

Normally, at the annual conference, we announce the CVBT volunteer Board members that are due to reaffirm their terms of service. I have included the Board members below, who's terms are up for renewal, and their willingness to continue their hard work for the organization. I both commend and thank them for all they do for CVBT and battlefield preservation

Jim Pates, Founding Member.

Jack Blalock, Government Relations

Pete Kolakowski, Vice President

Charlie McDaniel

Board member Ed Gillis has relocated residence to Florida and has decided to retire from the CVBT Board as he is unable to attend meetings and events to the level that he feels is productive. I and the entire CVBT board of directors thank Ed for all he has done. We will continue to communicate as his extensive business knowledge is a true asset.

Included in this mailing is a document showing the CVBT financial position for your information. We are on sound footing even in the face of extremely diminished donations and questionable future Federal and State grant funding. I have made the decision to curtail our land donation appeals in the face of this unprecedented time we are living through. With the COVID-19 virus disrupting all our lives, producing millions of lost jobs and turning the economy on its head, I simply feel that what is pressing now is not what was as important to us all a few months ago. Don't get me wrong, we at CVBT still need to pay the bills and continue our mission. We continue to need your support, but we are taking advantage of every income stream we possibility can find to permit us to continue. So, I ask you all take care of yourselves and family first, stay safe and we will all get through this. Please don't forget your organization is still working and adding creativity every day to continue the mission.

We are all Partners in preservation as well as Partners in this unprecedented moment in time.

I leave you with this quote by Florence Nightingale,
How very little can be done under the spirit of fear.

Sincerely,



Tom Van Winkle
President - CVBT

Central Virginia
Battlefields Trust